



## Walter Reed Program - Tanzania

*The Walter Reed Program - Tanzania, a collaborative effort led by the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR), is a leading partner in the fight to end HIV through research and implementation of PEPFAR prevention, care, and treatment programs.*

Since 2001 The Walter Reed Program-Tanzania (WRP-T) has partnered with the U.S. Military HIV Research Program (MHRP) at WRAIR to conduct clinical trials and other research to address infectious diseases, primarily HIV. WRP-T and other local partners also work to prevent and treat HIV in communities with programs funded by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

The National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR)-Mbeya Medical Research Center (MMRC) is the primary research partner in WRP-T, and it became an HIV Vaccine Trial Network (HVTN) clinical research site as part of the MHRP Clinical Trials Unit in 2013.

Since then, NIMR-MMRC has successfully implemented three HIV vaccine trials funded by the U.S. NIH/NIAID and DAIDS. WRP-T has also conducted many vaccine trials outside of the HVTN, including trials for Ebola and TB, as well as cohort studies that contribute to vaccine research and trial development.

NIMR-MMRC also has significant experience conducting research with HIV-positive study participants, vulnerable populations such as pregnant women and infants/children, diagnostic and operational research, and therapeutic drug trials for both HIV and TB.

### Cohort Studies with MHRP

Over a period of 10 years, MHRP, in partnership with NIMR-MMRC, carried out a large prospective acute infection cohort study, RV217. This site enrolled 633 volunteers in the study for twice-weekly blood collections with 26 incident acute infections observed. The high rate of volunteer visit compliance was key to study success. RV217 concluded in 2018 and provided the first characterization of acute HIV infection.

The program continues to support the PEPFAR-funded African Cohort Study (AFRICOS), a 15-year cohort longitudinal study that evaluates the impact of clinical, biological and socio-behavioral issues on HIV infection and disease progression.

### Robust Community Engagement

The Community Advisory Board (CAB) of 20 members drawn from the Mbeya community has been in operation since 2005. The CAB serves as a bridge between the research center and the local community, and board members represent diverse stakeholders and populations in the community. CAB members and MMRC staff participate in health awareness events to help bridge the research information gaps between researchers and community and educate the public on the role of research in health and development.

### Completed Vaccine Studies with WRAIR

- **DNA/MVA vaccine study** - Karolinska Institute Vaccine Study TaMoVac 1/2
- **HIV vaccine trial** - HVTN 111
- **HIV bNAb therapy** - RV398: Safety and Virologic Effect of a Monoclonal Antibody Administered Intravenously to Adults During Early Acute HIV Infection
- **Ebola vaccine** - RV456: Phase 2 Ebola Vaccine Study - Investigated safety and immunogenicity of two Ebola vaccine regimens in healthy and HIV-1 infected volunteers



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## **Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored and Safe (DREAMS)**

In September 2020, the PEPFAR DREAMS program, implemented in the Mbeya Region by WRP-T, celebrated the first ever DREAMS graduation saluting 1,804 adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) who completed their core training program.

The DREAMS program includes a core package of interventions at the community and clinical levels that address key factors that make AGYW particularly vulnerable to HIV including gender-based violence, exclusion from economic opportunities and lack of access to secondary school for AGYW, their children and their sexual partners. Graduates of the DREAMS program are putting their new-found entrepreneurial skills to good use with jobs in tailoring, engineering, soap making and more.



## **President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)**

With PEPFAR support, HJFMRI and local implementing partners engage with military and civilian populations in Tanzania's Southern Highlands region to fight HIV/AIDS. The program's integrated approach to HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment allows the program to offer a range of services to address transmission, co-infections and overall health and nutrition.

The military program is executed in tandem with the Tanzania People's Defence Force (TPDF), which oversees operations in military health facilities throughout Tanzania, including eight zonal hospitals.

The civilian prevention, care and treatment program was developed with local partners in the Southern Highlands, including the regions of Mbeya, Rukwa, Katavi and Songwe. The program is conducted in collaboration with the Mbeya Zonal Referral Hospital (MZRH) and the Mbeya, Katavi, Songwe and Rukwa Regional Administrative Secretariats (RAS) and Regional Medical Offices (RMO). The program, referred to locally as the Walter Reed Program-Tanzania, also works in close coordination with the Ministry of Health (MOH), the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP) and the President's Office - Regional Administration and Local Government (PORALG).



## **PEPFAR Program Highlights**

### **Human Resources for Health in HIV Prevention and Care**

WRP-T provides technical assistance and training to build capacity of clinicians in HIV patient care and treatment, using the National AIDS Control Programme curriculum. This technical support has been integral to expanding facility-based care at MZRH and treatment throughout the zone. In addition to strengthening capacity at the facility level, the program works with local partners to expand outreach and education in HIV care and treatment through village health care workers, home-based care volunteers and orphans and vulnerable children caregivers in the community.

The TPDF program has successfully trained a cadre of TPDF service providers and supports them with customized data collection tools for enhanced performance. The program also supports the Tanzanian government in implementing and scaling-up TB preventive therapy in line with national guidelines.



### **Cervical Cancer Screenings**

HJFMRI implements screening programs in four regions of the Southern Highlands Zone (Mbeya, Songwe, Rukwa, and Katavi) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health to strengthen cervical cancer detection and prevention.

### **First Response Training for Gender Based Violence (GBV)**

Staff are participating in a series of virtual GBV training of trainer events so that they are better informed on intimate partner violence (IPV) and can train health care providers to identify IPV, offer risk assessments and psychological support to GBV survivors in line with safe and ethical index testing standards. The training is an interagency collaboration and was originally developed by WHO.